United Nations A/C.1/53/PV.5

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

First Committee

5th Meeting
Wednesday, 14 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier ..... (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Holum (United States of America): The First Committee meets this year at a time of serious challenges to world security. This decade has brought remarkable achievements in arms control and non-proliferation, and they need no elaboration, for the members of this Committee have contributed greatly to their realization. Continued deep reductions in United States and Russian nuclear forces; the signing of our longest-sought and hardest-fought-for goal, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC); the considerable strengthening of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, including full-scope safeguards as a supply condition; the decisions by South Africa and several States of the former Soviet Union to abandon and forswear nuclear weapons, and of several other States to rule out the possibility of acquiring them — all of these represent major progress towards a new era in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons are further reduced and ultimately abolished.

But there are glaring exceptions to this positive trend. It is a fair assessment to say that just as the world's resistance to weapons of mass destruction has stiffened, the hardest cases have all grown worse. Indeed, if past First Committee sessions have reflected the hope born of mighty achievements, this one ought to reflect the sobering reality that our common endeavours have lost ground to make up. The First Committee at this session, I suggest, needs to concentrate especially hard on the real work at hand.

Against the advances of the past decade, the nuclear-weapon tests conducted last May by India and Pakistan are all the more deplorable and disheartening. These tests not only pose a serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime but present profound dangers on the ground. The world learned painfully along with the United States and the Soviet Union how high the risk of war becomes when ballistic missile velocities reduce attack warning to a matter of minutes. But that was for intercontinental ranges. If nuclear-capable missiles are deployed, India and Pakistan will have no minutes. Flight times will be less than reaction times, and there will be a hair trigger on nuclear war.

This year has also brought intensified concern about nuclear-weapon potential in North Korea and, most recently, the provocative launch by North Korea which passed directly over Japanese territory, raising serious concerns in Japan that are shared by its close friends and allies, including the United States.

In another tense region, the Gulf, proliferation of mass-destruction weapons also concerns the international community. Iraq's continuing resistance to United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections and Iran's development of longer-range missiles diminish international security.

98-86071 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

It is up to all of us to find the silver lining in these figurative mushroom clouds in South Asia and other ominous developments. By sharpening the world's focus on the dangers of proliferation, the events of this year may show the way forward, and the international response to these problems gives us some cause for hope. Within a few days of the nuclear-weapon tests that so shocked the world many key institutions and groups of nations had condemned the tests and laid out measures India and Pakistan would have to take to regain standing within the international community. The General Assembly, the permanent members of the Security Council, the Rio Group, the Security Council in resolution 1172 (1998) and 47 members of the Conference on Disarmament all delivered a clear, firm and consistent message: India and Pakistan must take concrete steps to bring their actions into line with the global non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament norms.

Among the most urgent measures or benchmarks established by the international community are an end to nuclear testing and prompt signature and ratification of the CTBT without conditions; an end to the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and, to that end, engagement in productive negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; restraint in the development of nuclear-capable missiles and controls on the export of sensitive materials.

The international community has also called on India and Pakistan to continue discussions to alleviate the tensions between them, including those arising in Kashmir. In our bilateral efforts with both India and Pakistan, the United States has urged the same steps.

The steadfastness and unity of the world community have yielded some progress. We regard positively the announcements by both nations' Prime Ministers to the General Assembly that their countries are prepared to adhere to the CTBT. We also welcome their agreement to engage in fissile material cut-off negotiations, which began last August in the Conference on Disarmament, and leaders of the two countries have agreed to resume a review of outstanding disputes.

Clearly, tangible progress on the international community's benchmarks will take more time. It will also take a steadfast international community. For our part, until more progress is achieved, lifting sanctions and strengthening cooperation with India and Pakistan will be difficult. At the same time, we remain committed to continuing our discussions at both the senior and expert levels.

Events in South Asia underscore the tremendous importance of efforts to enhance our common security through international agreements and norms. Some say the inadequate progress towards complete nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States justifies or explains Indian and Pakistani actions. With all respect, that is nonsense. I identify with the yearning for more progress and with disappointment that the process can be difficult and slow. But can anyone honestly believe that nuclear-weapon tests in South Asia are good for the cause of disarmament? Are more nuclear explosions and proliferation really the route to fewer nuclear weapons?

Other sceptics say that South Asian testing shows that the CTBT and the NPT are worthless. In fact, it confirms that they are essential. The problem is not the NPT or the CTBT; the problem is that, unlike most of the rest of the world, India and Pakistan have not joined. Now, in response to international appeals, both States have told the General Assembly that they will indeed join the CTBT rather than pursue continued sabre-rattling with more tests. In kind, the international community has made clear its expectation that they will also adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

We must seize this moment of heightened attention to global security to strengthen this international regime. The NPT remains the cornerstone. Brazil's recent accession brings the NPT closer to universality and clearly illustrates its continued significance to ensuring global security. The year 2000 NPT Review Conference promises to provide further opportunities to strengthen this vital instrument.

Since 1992 the International Atomic Energy Agency has adopted a series of new measures to strengthen its safeguards system, most notably a Model Protocol that gives the IAEA new tool to assist in tracking the use and location of nuclear materials around the world. The United States has already signed a protocol that includes all the measures in the Model Protocol. We hope all countries will adopt such protocols to their IAEA agreements.

Even before it has entered into force the CTBT has created a nearly universal expectation that countries will not conduct nuclear test explosions. This norm helped create the climate for widespread condemnation of Indian and Pakistani testing. President Clinton is committed to securing the United States Senate's advice and consent to ratification, and we encourage such action by all other States that have not yet done so in order to bring the CTBT into force at the earliest possible time. This would cement the prohibition

against nuclear tests and provide a robust verification regime to help the international community detect and deter.

The fissile material cut-off treaty is the next logical multilateral step in advancing our shared nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. We should be encouraged that, in the wake of events in South Asia, all 61 members of the Conference on Disarmament agreed to begin these negotiations, which we strongly hope will resume quickly in January. The treaty would cap the amount of fissile material available for nuclear weapons globally, extend verification measures to all enrichment and reprocessing facilities and prohibit those countries that have recently halted fissile material production for weapons, including the United States, from resuming it. It would also foster the creation of a climate conducive to continued, long-term progress on reducing nuclear-weapon stockpiles and promote stability in regions where the risk of escalating arms races is greatest.

Of course, getting negotiations under way is the easy part. Important national interests are at stake. Complex technical issues will not easily be solved. We urge all States to negotiate in good faith with an eye towards completing these negotiations in a timely manner. We believe that can be done.

Nuclear weapons occupy the bulk of our attention, but we also have vitally important work ahead on other weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery and on especially destructive conventional arms. We must devote ourselves to fully implementing prohibitions on biological and chemical weapons. That means completing next year the work of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Ad Hoc Group on a compliance protocol. It also means destroying existing stocks of chemical weapons under the CWC regime.

We must do all we can to ensure that these weapons, which humanity rightly considers particularly repulsive, do not proliferate further and are not available for terrorist use. All States should cooperate with export control regimes to prevent proliferation of mass-destruction weapons and their delivery systems. States that adhere to the international non-proliferation and disarmament norms have nothing to fear from such controls. At the same time, States that possess high technology have a responsibility to prevent the proliferation of that technology to States or non-State actors that would use it to threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction.

With the Ottawa Convention entering into force next month, we applaud efforts by the Convention's supporters to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and the humanitarian crisis they cause. We share that goal. Although United States security concerns have prevented us from signing the Convention, we will do so by 2006 if we succeed in identifying and fielding suitable alternatives to our anti-personnel and anti-tank landmine systems. Meanwhile, the United States believes that it is important for the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate an anti-personnel landmine transfer ban to help dry up the supply of anti-personnel landmines from States not party to the Convention.

A serious challenge to all nations and one of growing international interest — and rightly so — is to restrict and regulate the flow of small arms. Secretary of State Albright has recently underscored United States support for a number of initiatives to address this problem. She has stressed the importance of responsible arms transfer practices that are effective worldwide, to be negotiated under United Nations auspices based on the pathbreaking Convention against illicit trafficking negotiated by the Organization of American States. We should set the year 2000 as a target date to conclude those talks, as well as to restrict the export of shoulder-fired missiles. Secretary Albright also called for an international centre to collect and share information on arms transfers.

Especially this year, as we take up these many challenges, we should reject efforts to change the subject. It may be natural to want to focus on the weapons and policies of the other guy, and doubtless it is natural to want to place the main burden on the biggest guys. The nuclear-weapon States' work towards nuclear disarmament is, of course, a critical piece of the picture, but it is far from the entire canvas, and it must not be used to excuse inaction or justify wholly unacceptable action by others.

The challenge to strengthen global security is put before us all. Let me assure the Committee that the United States remains committed to nuclear disarmament, pursuant to article VI of the NPT. Over the past decade the United States has eliminated more than 10,000 nuclear weapons from its military arsenals, along with more than 1,700 missile-launchers and bombers, under the INF and START I Treaties. We have not conducted a nuclear-weapon test explosion since 1992, we ceased the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons many years ago and we have removed more than 200 tons of fissile material from our military stockpile.

The United States and the Russian Federation together have deactivated or eliminated more than 18,000 strategic and tactical nuclear warheads. At last year's Helsinki summit President Clinton and President Yeltsin agreed that the next step in strategic arms control would take us to a cumulative 80 per cent reduction from cold-war peaks of deployed weapons, and we are working jointly to remove and make unsuitable for weapons large quantities of fissile material. At the recent Moscow summit Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed on principles for the disposition by each country of approximately 50 metric tons of plutonium released from defence programmes. We are both already blending down highly enriched uranium (HEU) from our defence programmes for use as power reactor fuel.

Although not participants in formal negotiations on reductions of nuclear arms, the United Kingdom and France have unilaterally eliminated entire classes of nuclear weapons and substantially reduced the overall levels of their nuclear forces.

What is most significant is what these reductions say about the lessened role of nuclear weapons in world affairs. Who can now believe that the great Powers of the future will be defined as those possessing nuclear weapons? Surely not the courageous leaders of South Africa, who abandoned their nuclear-weapons programme in the recognition that their country would be more secure by supporting and adhering to global non-proliferation norms. Surely not Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which chose the status of non-nuclear-weapon States and returned all nuclear weapons not destroyed on their soil to Russia. Surely not Germany and Japan, the two economic giants and leading candidates for permanent membership in the Security Council, which decided it was not in their interest to use their technical capabilities to develop nuclear weapons, and joined the NPT in the 1970s. Surely not the 182 non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, which decided that they could maintain their security — and prestige, for that matter — far better by agreeing to forswear nuclear weapons than by engaging in a costly and dangerous effort to acquire them.

The reduced role of nuclear weapons can also be seen in the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which now cover about a hundred countries. If South Asia became a nuclear-weapon-free zone, India and Pakistan could seek the same legally binding assurances nuclear-weapon States now extend to Latin America and the Caribbean and shortly will provide to the States of the South Pacific and the African continent.

The choice is clear to us all. We can continue on the road towards further strengthening the global non-proliferation regime and reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, or we can turn away and invite the perils of nuclear proliferation and a nuclear-arms race. The vast majority of the international community has chosen the first course. The United States will make its contribution to sustaining the world's momentum in that same direction. We have a responsibility to do so. We hope countries that took a different path are rethinking their decisions. With a new awareness of the stakes, let us renew our determination, redouble our efforts and move all nations towards the destination of a safer world.

Ms. Molaroni (San Marino): I should like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and in thanking your predecessor for the excellent work he carried out last year. We all know that this mandate is an important and politically complex one. It needs a good dose of expertise, high diplomacy and, most of all, farsightedness, because in the field of disarmament issues have to be faced with accuracy and depth, and the results are visible only in the long or very long run.

My delegation has been following the work of this important Committee with particular attention. My country's policy on disarmament is based on promoting principles that we believe to be just and rational, completely free from conflicts of interest, and in the ultimate conviction that the only and sure result of wars is destruction.

I was told some time ago that countries like mine should stop interfering on the international scene and propagandizing useless ethical principles and ideals, and that the international scenario is based only on the economic interests of some countries. But everybody knows that if one does not tend to the ideal one will never reach the best. Maybe, thanks to those very countries that are free from conflicts of political and economic interest, the international community will guarantee the common good, avoiding allowing wrong or misguided interests to lead us to the end.

Although at a first glance at the international environment it might seem that the Republic of San Marino had ratified a relatively small number of treaties, it must not be forgotten that our modern international political life is quite young and that our country only recently entered the big international organizations.

Our Republic has a strong and deep commitment to international disarmament and to the total elimination of

existing nuclear armaments. We believe that the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, even if only in self defence, is a totally shortsighted and irresponsible answer. A chain reaction based on retaliation is a danger for humanity as a whole. We welcome the establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which will certainly play an important role in international disarmament. We also welcome the treaties and conventions created in recent years, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), in 1993; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), in 1996, and the subsequent creation of an Ad Hoc Committee on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). We hope that more and more countries will ratify them. They have not yet achieved the results the international community expected. In addition, it seems that treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are not sufficient to curb the abuse of such weapons.

We feel that the reason for the nuclear arms race has changed. It is no longer merely an instrument for affirming a dangerous military supremacy, but is a way to acquire status, nationally and internationally. Such status could be achieved in other ways, using the same economic resources in other fields.

Recent nuclear tests, the latest in a long series that my Government condemns in the Asian region, opened a new and worrying chapter of the nuclear era, a chapter that seems to be internationally uncontrollable.

My country is committed to greater transparency in armaments, the only point of departure for achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. For this reason, last year we supported the draft resolution submitted by Japan, Iceland and the European Union, entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", which was adopted as resolution 52/38 K.

Furthermore, we are interested in a new draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.48) put forward by Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden and South Africa, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", emanating from the joint declaration by those countries, principally because we are aware of the need for a concrete change in the international nuclear disarmament agenda.

We have always supported the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice holding that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal, that negotiations for complete nuclear disarmament must be carried on in good faith under international control, and that the production, testing, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons are forbidden. The relevant resolution (resolution 52/38 O) adopted last year, of which San Marino was a sponsor, is in our opinion the basis for denuclearization. Good faith must guide the work of the Committee to reach a result worth working for.

For that reason, my country will support any proposal designed to create nuclear-weapon-free zones. The establishment of such zones on the basis of agreements freely concluded between interested States — such as the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok and the Antarctic Treaty — is an important contribution towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Today there are up to 114 States signatories of these Treaties, and they cover more than 50 per cent of the planet.

In the same context, I should like to mention here the courageous proposal of the Permanent Representative of Mongolia on the establishment of a single nuclear-weapon-free State. Such self-declaration should be recognized by the international community and given the importance, official status and inviolability it deserves.

The achievement of real nuclear disarmament requires the commitment of us all. Nuclear States or States with nuclear capabilities should reduce their arsenals with a view to their total elimination. States producing nuclear-weapon components should convert their production. Nuclear-weapon-free States should monitor the compliance of all countries with the international treaties on the subject.

The Republic of San Marino has been patiently following, step by step, the process that will eventually lead to general and complete disarmament. The Republic of San Marino considers that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could be useful in promoting the awareness of the international community and in enhancing momentum.

San Marino was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel

Mines and on Their Destruction and has always supported resolutions in favour of demining and of the mobilization of as many countries as possible to assist in the process. We cherish the fact that the 1997 treaty on the elimination of landmines — the Ottawa Convention — will finally enter into force in March 1999, following its ratification by the fortieth country, Mozambique, last September. We welcome Mozambique's offer to host the first meeting of the States parties. We also congratulate all the other countries that joined the treaty after Mozambique, and we encourage those that have not yet done so to ratify soon. We applaud Canada and Norway for promoting this initiative.

We also followed with interest the press conference organized by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines on 1 October 1998, on the occasion of the fortieth ratification of the Ottawa Treaty and its entry into force. We should like to recall and support the following words of Ms. Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General, at that press conference:

> "The fight against landmines is a priority for the United Nations."

In addition, San Marino is satisfied with the importance given to the promotion of respect for environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of disarmament agreements and in arms control. My country would also like to appeal to all countries with mine-producing industries to convert their production and in this way to help the international community to free itself from this nefarious legacy of war.

Since San Marino joined the United Nations as a full Member in 1992 it has always co-sponsored all resolutions relating to the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. It has been a member of the Mediterranean Conference since 1975 and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) since 1994.

We are convinced that a lot can be done at a regional level, and this was confirmed by the statements my delegation heard on 26 September at the briefing organized by the Governments of Canada and Norway — an informative session at ministerial level on small arms and light weapons — and at the seminar that followed. My delegation attended both events with great interest. The large attendance was reassuring. We view as particularly interesting and noteworthy the several programmes at regional and national levels to limit the supply of, demand for, traffic in and use of small arms and light weapons. We recognize the danger these arms pose to a country's political stability.

Lastly, we should like to emphasize the absolute merit of the concept of total transparency in armaments, which is the point of departure for preventing their wrong use. Last year we voted in favour of the draft resolution entitled "Transparency in armaments", which became resolution 52/38 R. San Marino supports the German position expressed in the working paper (A/CN.10/194) on "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". The paper encourages the creation of regional arms registers focusing in particular on small arms and light weapons and agreements aiming at the prevention and reduction of the excessive accumulation of armaments.

San Marino, in its 16 centuries of history, has not produced or traded in armaments. It does not have an army and it has never declared war, nor has it ever taken part in one. We believe San Marino to be living proof that peace and respect among States is effectively possible.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to congratulate the other officers of the Committee on their election. I am confident that with your wide experience you will guide our work towards a successful conclusion, and to this end I assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation. Allow me also to extend our most sincere appreciation to Mr. Nkgowe of Botswana for his vigilance in steering our work at the last session of the General Assembly.

The First Committee meets today in the aftermath of serious developments in the international arena that pertain directly to the field of disarmament. These developments, serious as they are, should be properly reflected upon and carefully analysed in order that we may remain focused on our clear and ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, better concentrate our attention on the best interests of the international community and live up to our common determination, as reflected in the very first words of the United Nations Charter:

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

I always find it pertinent to re-emphasize the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament. Those priorities were clearly outlined in the 1978 Final

Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in the Programme of Action contained therein, where nuclear disarmament was accorded the utmost and highest priority, followed by disarmament of other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. Those priorities should be observed until we decide otherwise through a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, whose convening should not be held hostage to the arrogant consent of one or the extravagant ambitions of another.

The end of the cold war created a rare window of opportunity and generated much hope that the international community would finally be able to spare the world from the most destabilizing of military doctrines ever, which were based on the retention of nuclear arsenals, and that it would consequently make a nuclear-weapon-free world a foreseeable reality. The findings of the Canberra Commission are a guiding torch that makes it abundantly clear to those who persist in upholding those doctrines that their continued policies have been proved to be among the greatest deceptions of all time. The report of the Canberra Commission states:

> "Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them."

The Canberra Commission issued a clear warning, but the regrettable fact is that no one has listened. The recent nuclear tests in South Asia are unequivocal testimony to that effect.

The immense destructive character of nuclear weapons, in any sensible, logical or reasonable view, leads concerned thinkers to believe that that horrific character should of itself generate momentum for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The attainment of the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is indispensable, and the rationale of our resolve is self-evident. The mere existence of nuclear weapons constitutes in itself a serious threat to international peace and security. It is ironic, however, that the efforts of the international community have not yielded significant results, despite a stream of General Assembly resolutions, references in international legal instruments — most notably in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the findings of the Canberra Commission, the determined contributions of non-governmental organizations and various other worldwide initiatives. The common factor is that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

Indeed, several initiatives have been launched. Allow me to refer here to the joint declaration of eight States, among which Egypt played an active role, entitled, "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". The eight Foreign Ministers met in New York last month and reaffirmed their intention to introduce a follow-up draft resolution at the current session of the General Assembly. We are encouraged by the considerable support we have already received, and we hope that the draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.48), which reflects the repeated calls of the international community for urgent action on the important issue of nuclear disarmament, will enjoy overwhelming support.

The recent summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban reiterated its call upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as a highest priority, an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations in 1998 on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-weapons convention, within a specific time-frame. In this context, Egypt reaffirms the continued validity of the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in August 1996 by 28 of the Movement's members. The programme of action is intended to rectify the lacunae in explicit commitments relating to nuclear disarmament, especially on the part of the nuclear-weapon States.

The establ ment within the Conference on Disarmament, under its agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament," of an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is a step, albeit modest, in the right direction. The proposed convention, in our view, must entail both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

Egypt regrets the continued absence of genuine political will among the nuclear-weapon States to embark on a serious course of multilateral negotiations leading to the full and complete implementation of the provisions of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which would

pave the way to the attainment of the goal of nuclear disarmament. We strongly believe that such a position, particularly in the aftermath of the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, not only contravenes their obligations under article VI but also undermines the whole purpose of the non-proliferation regime, namely, the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons as a step towards their complete elimination.

The series of nuclear tests recently conducted in South Asia has definitely created a new reality, which has to be firmly addressed by the international community. Those tests have clearly demonstrated that the legal framework established by both the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) have proved inadequate to safeguard, by themselves, the global non-proliferation regime. The international community has to address the issue at both the global and the regional levels pending the attainment of the objective of general and complete disarmament.

At the global level, we reaffirm the need for all States, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to work diligently and faithfully towards achieving the total elimination of, and a universal ban on, nuclear weapons as well as a total ban on fissile material, including the elimination of all stockpiles.

Equally, special attention should be accorded to achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. A paramount step in this direction is to achieve adherence to the Treaty by all States, without any exception. In this regard, the nuclear-weapon-capable States should, as a general rule, issue unequivocal declarations renouncing and reversing their military nuclear programmes, accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty without further delay and take subsequent necessary measures stemming from their Treaty obligations. Similarly, they should sign and ratify the CTBT.

Another step at the global level is to achieve international recognition that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security. As a matter of principle, Egypt strongly believes that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons could provide genuine security for all States. However, in the interim, we take note of the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. The Ad Hoc Committee is entrusted with the task of negotiating universal, unconditional and legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Security Council also has a responsibility to discharge, namely, that of adequately safeguarding the security of Member States. The Council should adopt a new resolution which would be of a more comprehensive nature and which would surpass the limited scope of the provisions of resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995). The new resolution should provide for measures that would ensure comprehensive protection and adequate assistance, thus encompassing the elements of credibility and deterrence. Those measures should be provided with a trigger mechanism that would enable the Security Council to intervene swiftly through a prior determination by the Council that any threat or use of nuclear weapons would in itself constitute a threat to international peace and security in accordance with the provisions of Article 39 of the United Nations Charter. Thus, the Council could speedily and automatically embark on the measures necessary to respond to the grave magnitude of a nuclear threat through the collective security system envisaged in the Charter.

At the regional level, the existing Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the Antarctic Treaty, have undoubtedly contributed to the exclusion of nuclear weapons from the entire southern hemisphere. The further pursuit of efforts to establish such zones, especially in regions of tension such as the Middle East and South Asia, should now be an urgent priority for the international community, to be pursued with vigour and determination.

We note with deep regret the failure of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of States parties to the NPT recently held in Geneva. Particularly dismaying is the stance of one delegation which is insisting on supporting and upholding the ambiguous nuclear policies, programmes and ambitions of a non-party to the NPT.

It is Egypt's firm intention to work as faithfully as possible towards a successful outcome of the forthcoming Review Conference and to take an active part in steering the NPT ship through the current turbulent tides and blustery winds to safe shores and warm shelter. However, if that policy persists, there will certainly be strongly voiced serious doubts as to the credibility of the indefinite Treaty. It is our conviction that sincere and consolidated efforts should be geared to the issuance by the Review Conference of an integral consensus document, a document that would enhance the implementation of all NPT provisions, a

document that would build constructively on the consensus results of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which included a package of three decisions and a resolution on the Middle East. The Durban summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement called upon the Review Conference to establish a body subsidiary to its Main Committee II to consider and recommend proposals for the implementation of the resolution. We fully endorse that call.

I now turn to the Middle East. Since 1974 the First Committee and the General Assembly have been adopting annually a resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Since before 1974 nuclear-weapon-free zones have mushroomed worldwide, in Latin America, the South Pacific, South East Asia and Africa, and concrete work is being carried out to establish yet another zone in Central Asia. The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones itself is ever evolving. Mongolia is active in promoting the concept of a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone. Belarus and others are also active in advancing a new concept of a nuclear-weapon-free space. Brazil, with the support of a large majority, successfully took the lead two years ago in rallying support for a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. These are all developments which Egypt warmly welcomes.

Regrettably, no such claim can be made for the Middle East. For over 17 years now, the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone draft resolution has been adopted unanimously, a record that attests to the overwhelming support for this objective. However, the plain truth is that the objective eludes us. No concrete measures, no working meetings and no serious talks have yet been held, formally or informally, among regional parties with a view to putting into practice what all of us here seem to aspire to.

Despite its frustration over the stagnation which characterizes the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone issue, Egypt firmly supports the implementation of the resolution that this body annually adopts. Nevertheless, our endorsement of that resolution must not be misconstrued or interpreted as tacit support for the unfortunate stagnation which has characterized this issue for too long now.

To the contrary, Egypt continues to be committed to the earliest establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and, indeed, of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. In a region such as the Middle East, such a zone must be looked upon not as an a posteriori peace dividend but as an essential confidence-building step facilitating and leading the way towards a just, comprehensive, stable and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Only one country in the Middle East is widely suspected of possessing a significant arsenal of nuclear weapons. Only one country in the Middle East operates unsafeguarded nuclear installations and facilities. Only one country in the Middle East refuses to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or even to discuss the nuclear issue. That country, of course, is Israel. Let us not be deluded. It is Israel which has singled itself out, and no one else. Nonetheless, the reaction of the international community to this dangerous and provocative situation, compared to its reaction to other situations, remains mitigated at best.

Double standards in the pursuit of the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation are dangerous and counterproductive. The international community should clearly choose. Either it is or it is not against the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the world. There is no "in between," there are no grey areas, there are no mitigating circumstances.

We fail to understand how certain countries can severely condemn and take strong action against one proliferator while all but condoning the actions of another. We also fail to understand how a country can claim to be seeking a just peace in the Middle East while it insists on maintaining its ability to annihilate its neighbours. Further, we fail to understand how major sponsors of clear draft resolutions can renege on their explicit commitments.

The draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.21) on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is in fact understated. The truth of the matter is that we should not continue complacently to voice concerns over a risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. If this risk situation is not quickly redressed, the draft resolution might one day come to be entitled "The risk of further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East". This is the situation Egypt is striving to avoid.

The argumentation employed by Israel in attempting to justify its erroneous position against adherence to the NPT and against placing all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards is nothing but a pretext to shield its nuclear policies, programmes and ambitions. They constitute serious obstacles that undermine the establishment of the zone and impair sincere regional and extra-regional efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East.

This attitude on the part of Israel not only undermines the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone but also

induces a similar position on the part of many States in the region vis-à-vis other international instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, most notably the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. The rationale is clear and simple: security cannot be divided among various types of weapons of mass destruction, on the one hand, and between weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, on the other. The initiative launched by President Hosni Mubarak in April 1990 to establish a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which was later encompassed in his broader initiative in June 1998 to hold an international conference with a view to achieving a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, carries a lot of weight in this regard.

Egypt supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building mechanism, not as an arms control mechanism. We are disappointed, however, at the outcome of the latest meetings of the Panel of Governmental Experts, not only because they failed to broaden the scope of the Register to cover military holdings and procurement through national production, but also because they failed to include additional categories of weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, transparency in weapons of mass destruction is as important as, if not more important than, transparency with regard to conventional weapons. Again, security is indivisible. It is obvious that those who are against extending the same treatment to weapons of mass destruction are the same ones who are aggressively seeking to enhance transparency in conventional weapons at any cost. They are clearly motivated by the umbrellas and security arrangements that shelter them. The year 2000 Panel of Governmental Experts should by no means be bound by a renewed vague assignment. On the contrary, they should be given a concrete mandate which will enable them to overcome the blatant deficiencies that cripple the normal functioning of the United Nations Register in its present form.

Next I turn to the landmines issue, on which our position is very well known. Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with over 22.7 million landmines planted in its soil by regional and extra-regional belligerents during various international and regional conflicts. In that light, I should like to restate Egypt's views on how to approach the landmine problem comprehensively. Regrettably, the Ottawa Convention has a vacuum in this regard owing to its severe deficiencies and serious loopholes. We believe that measures aimed at curbing mines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared to mine clearance in affected countries that are unable to achieve this objective on their own. The provision of technical and financial support and the transfer of the necessary advanced technology to enable those States to overcome this tragic legacy is of paramount importance.

In conclusion, I should like to stress the importance of the continued efforts of the United Nations system in the field of disarmament. This collective endeavour must strive towards optimum coordination between the work of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, without prejudice to their assigned mandates, rules of procedure and working methods, with a view to focusing international efforts on the pursuit of general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the current session. I am confident that, given your vast experience and outstanding diplomatic skills, you will guide the Committee to success. The Chinese delegation will cooperate fully with you and make our own contributions to the successful conclusion of the Committee's work. I also wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Nkgowe for his excellent work as Chairman of the First Committee at the last session.

With the end of the cold war, the trend towards multipolarity is gaining momentum, and the international situation as a whole is moving towards relaxation. Peace and development are the two main themes of the times. Against such a backdrop, some further progress has been achieved over the past year in international arms control and disarmament. However, 1998 has been far from tranquil. In disregard of the strong opposition of the international community, a certain country conducted nuclear tests in an attempt to gain regional hegemony and so-called great Power status. Such acts have posed a serious threat to the peace, security and stability of the region and the world as a whole and have caused a major setback in international arms control and disarmament efforts.

The nuclear tests conducted by India were nothing but a show of outrageous contempt for, and a heavy blow to, the widely supported international nuclear-non-proliferation regime. Subsequently, Pakistan was forced to respond with its own nuclear tests. The international community reacted quickly and strongly. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1172 (1998), denying India and Pakistan the status of nuclear-weapon States and urging them to stop

their nuclear-weapon development programmes and to accede without delay and without conditions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Resolution 1172 (1998) reflects the trend and the common will of the international community and should be fully implemented. It has sent a clear signal to the whole world that the international community is opposed to the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan and that the attempt to acquire so-called great Power status through such tests will go nowhere. We call upon India and Pakistan, and especially on the initiator of these nuclear tests, to take measures as soon as possible to meet the various requirements set forth in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998).

Settlement of the Kashmir issue is one of the key elements that will help bring peace and security to South Asia. The international community should move to help and to facilitate a peaceful and just resolution.

The history of more than a century has demonstrated that security is mutual. A country cannot enjoy genuine security unless it bases its own security on the common security of all countries. Security should be underpinned by mutual trust and common interest among States. After two world wars and decades of the cold war, interdependence among States should have become a well acknowledged understanding shared by the whole of the international community. Regrettably, however, although the cold war is over, the cold-war mentality dies hard. The nuclear tests in South Asia are one case in point. People are also concerned that, rather than dissolving with the end of the cold war, some military blocs and alliances established in that era are constantly expanding and gaining strength. A few countries, backed by their economic and technological superiority, are intensifying their efforts to develop sophisticated weapons that undermine the global strategic balance and stability. They are also frequently resorting to the use or threat of the use of force in international affairs. Such a practice of seeking one's own security at the expense of the security of others is detrimental to the further relaxation of international tension and will have a negative impact on international arms control and disarmament efforts.

Summing up past experience and lessons and preparing ourselves for future opportunities and challenges, we need to cultivate a new concept of security and seek new ways to maintain peace. The Chinese delegation believes that relations between States should be based on the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. This is the political basis and prerequisite for regional and international security. The practical way to maintain peace and security is to enhance mutual understanding and trust among countries through dialogue and cooperation and to undertake to resolve their differences and disputes through peaceful means. Economic development and common prosperity constitute the material bases of regional and global security. Now that international tensions are easing, a country should channel its limited resources to economic and social development so as to benefit its own people and, at the same time, provide guarantees for national security and that of the region as a whole.

The complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons is the common aspiration of mankind. We fully understand the wish of the large number of non-nuclear-weapon States for general and complete nuclear disarmament and their concern over the slow pace of this process. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does not imply that the nuclear-weapon States can possess nuclear weapons for ever. The nuclear-weapon States should intensify their efforts to fulfil the obligations set forth in article VI of the NPT. We call upon the two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals to implement their existing bilateral agreements on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible and, further, drastically to reduce their nuclear arsenals. This will not only have a positive impact on international peace and security but will also create favourable conditions for other nuclear-weapon States to participate in the nuclear disarmament process at an early date. I wish to point out here that the issue of nuclear disarmament should not be used by any country as an excuse for conducting nuclear tests. Such an act would only hamper the nuclear disarmament process.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China never participates in the nuclear arms race, nor has it ever evaded its responsibility for nuclear disarmament. We have always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, and we have unilaterally and unconditionally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. We call for an early conclusion of international legal instruments to this end. China is the only nuclear-weapon State that has made those commitments. Our commitments are sincere. China's limited nuclear force and its related policies have demonstrated that its nuclear weapons constitute no threat to any other country. That position of

China is of great significance in the prevention of nuclear war and has played a positive role in promoting the nuclear disarmament process and in reducing the risk of nuclear-weapons proliferation. This is a major contribution that we have made in our own way towards the realization of the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also call for the early conclusion of a convention banning nuclear weapons. Reductions can be achieved gradually, through appropriate steps and phases, from the larger arsenals to smaller ones, until the ultimate objective of nuclear disarmament is accomplished, thus freeing mankind from the menace of nuclear war. A nuclear-weapon-free world is a lofty objective to be pursued by several generations. We are ready to join hands with other countries in striving for its early realization.

Thanks to the joint efforts of all the parties concerned, the Conference on Disarmament has over the past two years entered a new phase. Last August the Ad Hoc Committee on the fissile-material cut-off treaty was established. China is in favour of the early negotiation and conclusion of a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Such a convention, in our view, will be important for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament.

The Chinese Government's basic position on the fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations can be summarized as follows. First, the scope of the convention, as set forth in the relevant resolution of the General Assembly and the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in 1995, as contained in the Shannon Report, should be strictly adhered to, and should be the prohibition of production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Secondly, the convention's verification system should be formulated in accordance with the convention's scope and should not copy that of other treaties. Efforts should be made to ensure the effectiveness of the verification system and at the same time to reduce verification's cost as much as possible. Thirdly, the convention should enter into force after all countries with nuclear capabilities have ratified it. This will help to enhance the universality of the convention and guarantee that no country's security will be compromised.

Resolution 52/37, adopted by the General Assembly at its last session, calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and reaffirms that negotiations for the conclusion of an international agreement or agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space remain a priority task so as to ensure that the exploration and exploitation of outer space are solely for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of humanity. This demonstrates the great importance that the international community attaches to the prevention of the weaponization of outer space.

People are concerned that activities in developing and testing outer space weapons systems have intensified in recent years. The weapons systems under research vary in form. Some are deployed entirely in outer space or are targeted at objects in outer space, while others are based in outer space to provide target information or guidance for ground-weapon systems. As a consequence of such activities, outer space will be turned into a weapons base and battlefield, and regional and global strategic stability will be undermined.

Under such circumstances, the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, should re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a treaty on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space to complement the existing legal instruments. We call upon the countries concerned to work together to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament plays its due role in this regard.

China has always supported international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As a State party to the NPT, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), China has faithfully honoured its treaty obligations and has imposed strict controls on the export of sensitive items and their production technologies and equipment. Over the past two years the Chinese Government has promulgated regulations on the supervision and control of chemicals, regulations on nuclear export control and regulations on the control of the export of dual-use nuclear materials and related technology. These regulations have further improved China's export control regime and placed it under legal supervision. Moreover, China also applies strict controls to the transfer of conventional military equipment and related technologies, and issued regulations on the control of the export of military products in October 1997.

Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of science and technology are two sides of the

same coin. They should complement rather than exclude each other. The Chinese Government maintains that international non-proliferation efforts should be fair and rational and that no double standards should be applied under which non-proliferation is used as a pretext to infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of other countries. Only in that way, and when accompanied by the promotion of international economic and scientific cooperation and exchanges, can international non-proliferation efforts be more effective.

Negotiations on the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention have been going on in an intense but orderly manner since 1995. Not long ago, Ministers of some of the States parties to the BWC held a meeting in New York and issued a joint statement calling for the early conclusion of negotiations on the protocol. This is a strong political impetus to those important negotiations.

China has always been in favour of the creation of practical and feasible verification mechanisms for the BWC and has been actively promoting international cooperation in the field of biotechnology. In fact, in its statement upon acceding to the BWC in 1984 China pointed out that lack of effective verification measures was a defect of the Convention and should be corrected in due course. With regard to verification of the Convention, China is of the view that, while ensuring the effectiveness of verification measures, it is important to prevent the abuse of verification to avoid unnecessary interference with the normal production, scientific research and trade of the States parties and to protect their legitimate commercial and security confidentiality. China supports efforts to push the negotiations on the protocol to an early conclusion. However, good wishes should aim at fine results. The fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention still has over a hundred unresolved problems since entering into force more than a year ago has taught us that it is unwise simply to pursue speedy negotiations and to disregard the quality of the results achieved. The key is to negotiate a good protocol. China is ready to make concerted efforts with other countries to achieve this goal.

On 29 August 1998 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China ratified the amended landmine Protocol and the newly annexed Protocol on blinding laser weapons to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). China will formally deposit its instruments of ratification of those two Protocols with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

China is in favour of imposing proper and reasonable control on landmines so as to protect innocent civilians from injuries caused by those weapons. China believes that while we are perfecting relevant international laws to impose strict control on the use and transfer of landmines the most pressing issue at present is to assist mine-affected countries to remove remaining mines that still threaten civilian lives. We have noted with relief that in recent years many countries have been generous in this regard and are drawing up and implementing a series of assistance plans. During his visit to Canada last November, President Jiang Zemin declared that China would actively participate in international mine-clearance efforts. This year many places in China have been hit by the worst flooding of the century and have suffered enormous economic losses. The Chinese Government has spent a huge amount of money on fighting the floods and on disaster relief. Despite that, the Chinese Government still decided to contribute $100,000 this year to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, which will be earmarked for demining activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In cooperation with relevant United Nations Departments, China will host two training courses in mine clearance in the next two years. Mine-clearance experts from the Chinese military will provide technical training to students from mine-affected countries. In addition, China will provide mine-detection and mine-clearance equipment to those countries.

The issue of small arms has increasingly caught the attention of the international community in recent years. Because of their various concerns, many countries and international organizations are exploring effective means to address the issue. Some countries have reached regional arrangements or have formulated unified policies for this purpose. It should be noted that small arms are not the root cause of regional turmoil and conflicts. All Governments are obligated to prevent the indiscriminate killing and injuring of civilians by small arms, but they also have the right to possess small arms for the purpose of national defence. Given the complexity of the issue, it is impossible to expect a simple solution. To treat both the root and the symptoms of the problem, it is necessary to look for solutions tailored to the different characteristics of each region and the varying natures of problems.

The United Nations has done a great deal of work in tackling the issue of small arms. China supports an active role for the United Nations in this regard, and has sent governmental experts to participate in the work of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. The plan of Coordinated Action on Small Arms recently issued by the United Nations Department for

Disarmament Affairs contains many ideas and objectives that are worth studying. In addition, the United Nations Committee on Crime Prevention and Control has also made contributions to strengthening the control of small arms from the perspective of the prevention of transnational organized crime. The Chinese delegation is of the view that it is necessary for the United Nations to increase its efforts to mobilize the political will of international organizations and all countries to pool the strength of their experts so that international efforts to tackle the issue of small arms are conducted in a practical, coordinated and effective manner.

Apart from the formulation of treaties, the work of international arms control and disarmament also includes the implementation of treaties. Implementation is not only part and parcel of that work, but also its ultimate objective. We have noted with regret that some treaties are still far from being universal and that, while having acceded to the treaties, certain great Powers are using various excuses to evade their treaty obligations. This has seriously compromised the effectiveness of the treaties. The international community, therefore, should attach great importance to, and strive to facilitate the implementation of, existing international arms control and disarmament treaties so that they are able to play their due role in promoting the process of international arms control and disarmament.

A new century and a new millennium are coming. What kind of a world are we going to bring into the next century and millennium? That is a question that everyone who is concerned about the future of mankind should consider seriously. A peaceful, stable and prosperous world is in the interests of all countries; at the same time, it requires the joint efforts of all countries. The Chinese Government and people are ready to make unremitting efforts, together with the international community, to create a better future for mankind.

Mr. Pawar (India): The Indian delegation extends to you, Sir, its sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that with your vast diplomatic skills and experience you will be able to steer the work of the Committee to a fruitful outcome, to which end my delegation pledges its full cooperation with you.

While I shall be highlighting some of the main elements of my statement, I would request that its full text, which is being circulated to delegations, be fully reflected in the Committee's record.

The international security and disarmament agenda remains burdened with a flawed security paradigm constructed during the cold-war years. Clearly, this security paradigm is in need of replacement with one that ensures the achievement of the objectives of international peace and security along with equal and legitimate security for all through global disarmament.

The failure of the international community to come to grips with the threat posed by nuclear weapons is due to the drawbacks in the main legal instrument that was designed to deal with nuclear weapons, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While India remains committed to the goals of a global non-proliferation regime, events have only served to confirm the shortcomings of the NPT.

The non-discriminatory international Conventions prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, respectively, were based on a devaluation of the military utility of such weapons and on the belief that, rather than partial and discriminatory arms control, the interests of the international security are better served by their complete prohibition and elimination. Disarmament was the chosen path, and the dividends are there for all to see.

The START process seems to be at a standstill. The initial promise of deep, continuous and irreversible reductions in strategic nuclear forces held out by the positive post-cold-war climate appears to be fading.

Doctrines of first use of nuclear weapons and the substantial numbers of such weapons on hair-trigger alert pose unacceptable risks, including that of the accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons. India proposes to introduce a draft resolution entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", and we hope that that initiative will receive widespread support.

Several distinguished institutions, including several non-governmental organizations, the media and other voices from civil society the world over, have supported the call for a world order based on the principles of equal and legitimate security for all, in the conviction that it is both essential and possible to bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Durban summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement accepted India's proposal that an international conference be held, preferably in 1999, with the objective of arriving at an agreement before the end of this millennium on a phased programme for the complete

elimination of nuclear weapons. The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, addressing the General Assembly on 24 September 1998, called upon all members of the international community, and particularly the other nuclear-weapon States, to join in this endeavour. There is no dilution of India's commitment to the goal of global nuclear disarmament. I should like to remind the Committee that in 1988, at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, proposed an action plan for a world free of nuclear weapons, calling on the international community immediately to undertake negotiations with a view to adopting a time-bound action programme to usher in a world order free of nuclear weapons and rooted in non-violence.

The Committee is aware of the circumstances that led to India's standing aside from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. That decision, taken on the basis of national consensus, was governed by various considerations, some of which have been addressed through the limited series of five underground nuclear tests conducted by India on 11 and 13 May 1998. These tests were conducted as a measured response to the deteriorating security environment and were not in violation of any legal obligation entered into by India. Thereafter India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground test explosions, thus already accepting the basic obligation of the CTBT.

As noted in its annual report, the Conference on Disarmament agreed to establish this year an An Hoc Committee to negotiate a treaty banning the the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We are aware that when the Conference on Disarmament is able successfully to negotiate such a treaty it will only be a partial measure and will not eliminate existing nuclear arsenals. India's participation in these negotiations will be to ensure that the treaty is non-discriminatory and is consistent with India's security interests.

The agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament on an Ad Hoc Committee on fissile material was made possible by the flexibility of a large group of delegations whose highest priority remains the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This flexibility should not be misread. As in previous years, India will be sponsoring, with other Member States, a draft resolution on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

The convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons can form the bedrock for negative security assurances that are comprehensive, legally binding and irreversible. We welcomed the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances in the Conference on Disarmament this year, and we look forward to the advancement next year of the useful work done by this Ad Hoc Committee.

We have consistently maintained that nuclear-weapon-free zones cannot do justice to the wide variety of concerns arising from the global nature of the threat posed by nuclear weapons. However, we respect the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General in submitting the report entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament" (A/53/202). With a view to carrying forward consideration of this subject at a time marked by the growing appetites of the military doctrines of major Powers for ever more advanced applications of science and technology for military purposes, India is proposing, along with co-sponsors that have lent invaluable support, a draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.15) on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament.

We support the early commencement of negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate instrument that would, as a first step, ensure the non-weaponization of space while preserving the use of space — the common heritage of mankind — for the full range of peaceful and development activities.

India remains committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. This objective can be achieved through a phased approach that enjoys international consensus and by addressing humanitarian concerns and the legitimate defence requirements of States.

We have expressed our concern regarding the continuing transfer of small arms and light weapons, especially where the illicit trade in such weapons leads to diversion to non-State entities, fuelling strife and terrorism. The recommendations received last year from the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms deserve our continuing attention, with a view to taking concrete steps to fight this menace.

The process of injecting greater transparency into the global arms trade would contribute to confidence and deserves our support. We believe that further consolidation and universalization of the Register is necessary to realize its full potential, at which point we will be in a better position to assess to what extent and in which direction the process can be carried forward.

At the Durban summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the need to continue to press for further steps leading to the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), with the participation of all States Members of the United Nations, as well as the need for SSOD IV to review and assess the implementation of the first such session. We believe that other initiatives, especially on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament, would complement as well as contribute to the success of SSOD IV when it is convened.

We have noted with satisfaction that agreement was possible regarding the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee, as well as the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): Allow me, Sir, to associate myself with the congratulations already addressed to you on your election to the honourable and responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee. In view of your wealth of experience, we hope to work fruitfully and successfully under your guidance in the search for mutually acceptable decisions on the countless issues of disarmament and international security considered in the Committee. I should also like to express gratitude to your predecessor, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Botswana, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe, for his successful contribution to the work of the Committee at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all delegations for the great honour done to my country and to me by electing me to the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee.

Your statement, Sir, and the statement of the Secretary-General at the opening of the general debate in the First Committee noted certain achievements in recent years in the sphere of disarmament at both the global and the regional levels. There are grounds for satisfaction at the increase in the number of States which have acceded to the most important treaties and agreements, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC).

At the same time, as was noted in your opening remarks, Sir, and in the statements of many of our colleagues, we must intensify still further our efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to achieve progress on disarmament issues.

A priority in the field of disarmament is to strengthen the nuclear-non-proliferation regime, the basis of which is comprised of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the decisions and resolutions of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. Kazakhstan attaches prime importance to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and ensuring the universal nature of the Treaty. We express the hope that the 2000 Review Conference will be marked by successful results, and we are ready to make our contribution to the preparations for the Conference and to the review process of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Kazakhstan, as a State which voluntarily gave up its nuclear heritage and was the first in the history of mankind to close a major nuclear testing ground, firmly supports the objective of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Our country signed the Treaty during the first week it was open for signature. We note with satisfaction that in two years the CTBT has been signed by 150 States, which is evidence of the broad support for this international instrument by Member States of the United Nations.

A firm proponent of strengthening regional and global security, Kazakhstan firmly opposes undermining the non-proliferation regime and calls upon India and Pakistan to heed the opinion of the vast majority of the international community and accede without delay to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We support the appeal by the Secretary-General to those countries to refrain from deploying nuclear weapons and to cease their weapons development programmes.

Upon signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Kazakhstan declared its desire to work for the strengthening of the regime for the monitoring of nuclear tests. In September this year an international conference on problems of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was

held at Kurchatov, Kazakhstan, timed to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the first joint experiment in the monitoring of nuclear tests. The conference was attended by leading specialists and experts from Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, as well as by representatives of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Conference on Disarmament. There was active discussion of the role of international treaties in guaranteeing the non-proliferation regime and of practical measures for maintaining it, as well as of the monitoring of nuclear tests. Programmes for eliminating the consequences of nuclear-weapon tests were also discussed. During the work of the conference, on 17 September, a demonstration calibration explosion was conducted, in the course of which, using chemical explosives, the last strategic missile silo was destroyed.

My Government is paying particular attention to the problems of converting the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, whose research facilities now form part of the national nuclear centre of Kazakhstan. For a number of objective reasons, Kazakhstan possesses a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution to the development of various methods of monitoring nuclear explosions. Four of Kazakhstan's seismic stations are included in the international monitoring system under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Kazakhstan is among the 10 countries with the largest number of seismic stations in that system, thus enabling us to make a real contribution to the test-monitoring regime.

On the threshold of the 2000 Review Conference, a significant step for the implementation of the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is the adoption by the Conference on Disarmament of a consensus decision on the start of negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament to prepare the corresponding treaty on fissile materials. Kazakhstan has always made and will continue to make its contribution to the non-proliferation of nuclear materials and technologies. We are ready to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group. In this connection, in its activities involving the export of nuclear materials and technologies Kazakhstan has been complying since 1997 with the guiding principles of that Group.

Kazakhstan is also interested in joining the Missile Technology Control Regime. Since we have a space vehicle launching site in our territory and possess scientific and technical potential in the missile-building field, we can make a considerable contribution to that regime and also actively develop cooperation in the field of the peaceful use of missile technology.

Discussions continue to centre on the provision of security assurances for the non-nuclear States. Those States are fully justified in raising this issue on the assumption that, if they have renounced possession of nuclear weapons and are fulfilling their obligations under article II of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they are entitled to count on receiving some legally binding negative security assurances. In this connection, Kazakhstan welcomes the decision to establish in the Conference on Disarmament an Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances.

In the context of strengthening regional security and the non-proliferation regime, Kazakhstan will continue work on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Since the adoption of resolution 52/38 on this subject at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, a number of meetings of experts from the Central Asian States, the nuclear Powers and the United Nations have taken place to develop acceptable ways and means of giving effect to this initiative. Some progress has been made in the work on a draft legal instrument on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our region. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for the assistance provided in implementing this initiative. I should also like to thank the delegations of Member States for the support expressed on this subject in their statements during the current discussion in the First Committee. We are aware of the complexity and responsibility of taking a decision on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and of the need for careful study of all the related issues, with the participation of experts from all interested countries.

The international community is faced with a complex task, that of finding effective ways and means of halting the proliferation of conventional weapons. We are aware of the vast importance of the process of reduction of conventional weapons, particularly those which are excessively injurious and have indiscriminate effects. Despite the fact that Kazakhstan has not yet acceded to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines, we fully support the humanitarian orientation of that instrument, the purpose of which is to prevent the proliferation of, and ultimately to destroy, weapons which daily claim thousands of human lives. As a contribution to the multilateral efforts in this sphere, Kazakhstan adopted in August 1996 a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines, including

their re-export and transit. At the same time, in view of the situation that is emerging in various countries of the world, the movement for the complete prohibition of anti-personnel landmines should, in our view, be constant and proceed in stages, and to this end the amended landmine Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on inhumane weapons needs to enter into force.

The strengthening of the principle of openness and transparency in military affairs, which is embodied in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, enjoys the support of more than 90 Member States, including Kazakhstan. We have been providing the necessary information since the Register came into existence. Kazakhstan advocates limiting the international trade in arms, a problem which has become particularly acute, as is apparent from the large number of regional conflicts. We believe that the main task in this respect is to create an international mechanism which will make it possible to solve this problem through joint efforts.

Kazakhstan is firmly devoted to the cause of strengthening international security and enhancing the role of international organizations in settling global and regional problems and conflicts. Pursuing a policy of constructive cooperation, Kazakhstan has created a belt of security and good-neighbourliness along its borders. We have no confrontations with any State in the world.

Kazakhstan consistently advocates the establishment of security structures in the Asian continent. We continue to work on implementation of the initiative put forward by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly for the convening of a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia, aimed at strengthening stability and security in Asia and at creating an effective cooperation mechanism. We note with satisfaction that this initiative is taking on real shape and becoming a tangible factor in contemporary international life.

Further evidence of this was the holding in Almaty in July this year of a meeting of the leaders of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan on issues of cooperation and confidence-building in the military field and the reduction of armed forces in the border areas. In the Joint Declaration adopted at that meeting, the leaders of the five States confirmed their desire to extend and strengthen multilateral cooperation in the context of the relevant agreements signed by them in Shanghai and Moscow in 1996 and 1997.

We believe that important contributions to strengthening regional security and stability have been made by the conclusion of the agreement between Kazakhstan and China on the delimitation of their State borders; the adoption of the Kazakh-Russian Declaration on eternal friendship and alliance for the twenty-first century; and the signing of the Treaty of eternal friendship between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The firm and consistent position of our State in the sphere of disarmament and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, as well as Kazakhstan's important contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, have won the recognition of many Member States of the United Nations. This, in our view, is precisely why Kazakhstan is entitled to expect full membership in the Conference on Disarmament, that unique international forum which has proved in practice its effectiveness in conducting negotiations on the most urgent problems of disarmament. I should like to express our hope that we shall receive the support of the delegations of Member States in the First Committee in this respect, in the light of General Assembly resolution 52/40 A.

Having participated for eight years in the work of the First Committee as the representative of Kazakhstan, I should like to emphasize the traditionally intensive and constructive nature of the discussions that take place here on the issues on the contemporary disarmament agenda. This is also facilitated to no small extent by our joint efforts to review the activity and rationalize the work of the First Committee. My delegation is ready, as at previous sessions, to work together actively with the delegations of Member States to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Jabir (United Republic of Tanzania): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, given your outstanding diplomatic skills and experience, you will guide the Committee to success. You can count on our cooperation and support in your important task. Our congratulations also go to the other officers of the Committee.

Once again we are meeting against the background of positive developments in the disarmament arena. Last year we witnessed the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) began its work. Tanzania is committed to the Convention and its Organization and has

already ratified the Convention. We call on all Member States to accede to the Convention as early as possible.

Last December the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was opened for signature. On 16 September the Convention recorded its fortieth ratification, the minimum provided for its entry into force. This Convention will not only make history for being the disarmament treaty to enter into force the fastest; it also reflects the great importance the world attaches to the elimination of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. We firmly believe that the first battle has been won against these weapons, which kill or maim innocent people indiscriminately long after the wars in which they had been employed are over. Efforts should now be directed towards the cause of landmine clearance by making available the technology and resources needed for this difficult but urgent task. Hand in hand with landmine clearance, there should be efforts to treat and reintegrate into society the victims of landmines. Tanzania is proud to be a signatory to this Convention, and while we are in the process of ratifying it we call upon those States that still have doubts and reservations to accede to it and to give it universal application.

We welcome the agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee for the negotiation of a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. We hope all parties will show a spirit of cooperation and negotiate in good faith to reach a successful conclusion. In the same vein, we welcome the decision by the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons. It is imperative, therefore, that nuclear-weapon States undertake, without conditions and under legally binding instruments, not to use or threaten to use those weapons against a non-nuclear State or in any nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The end of the cold war created hopes for an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. Those hopes, however, have been shattered by nuclear-weapon States' reluctance to denuclearize. Today, nuclear weapons remain the greatest menace to civilization. The reality of nuclear threat becomes more evident if we take into account the number of nuclear weapons in stock Lack of political will on the part of nuclear-weapon States remains the biggest hindrance to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Once again, my delegation calls on nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves to a time-bound framework to eliminate nuclear weapons. In this regard, we would reiterate our belief in multilateral negotiations leading to the early conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention.

My delegation deeply regrets the recent developments in South Asia, which have added to the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Indeed, non-proliferation and disarmament have suffered a serious blow. We believe that nuclear weapons cannot keep peace among nations nor guarantee its achievement. Instead, they create suspicion, raise tension and cause instability. In fact, deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. We therefore emphasize the importance of pursuing determined efforts to achieve the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has acquired increased significance in the overall context of regional disarmament. The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok are evidence of the determination of non-nuclear-weapon States to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. Nuclear-weapon-free zones constitute an important confidence-building and disarmament measure which enhances both regional and global peace and security. We have committed ourselves to the Pelindaba Treaty, guided by our conviction that such initiatives contribute to comprehensive efforts towards the ultimate goal of general and complete nuclear disarmament.

According priority to nuclear disarmament does not imply any disregard for the urgent need to work for arms control and disarmament. In this regard, my delegation places particular emphasis on the control of the transfer of small arms and light weapons. The excessive accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons is an issue of grave concern to my delegation. The illicit transfer of small arms has also been recognized as a big threat to national and international security.

Africa has increasingly become a victim of the scourge of small arms, which increase the intensity and duration of conflicts. Although they are not the root cause of conflicts, small arms contribute to heavy casualties, particularly among non-combatants, and increase human suffering. In this context, we fully agree with the Secretary-General's observation in his report on the causes of conflict in Africa that:

> "Arms exporting countries have a responsibility to exercise restraint, especially with respect to the export

of weapons into zones of conflict or tension in Africa." (*A/52/871, para. 28*)

We welcome all initiatives aimed at tackling the problems caused by small arms as well as measures for controlling their transfer. These initiatives include the Mali Moratorium; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Production of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, a Convention of the Organization of American States; the European Code of Conduct; and the Oslo Initiative. There is no doubt that all these initiatives will be accommodated under the United Nations coordination known as the Coordinating Action on Small Arms and that they will lead to a concrete action plan. We also support the convening of an international conference on small arms, as proposed by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are convinced that the disarmament mechanism established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could be carried forward by another special session.

Mr. Sidorov (Russian Federation)(*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first, on behalf of the Russian delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the important chairmanship of the First Committee. We firmly believe that your knowledge and experience will contribute to fruitful work by the Committee and help to create an environment promoting cooperation and the search for mutually acceptable solutions. Needless to say, you can count on the Russian delegation for its support in the discharge of your duties.

Our present broad agenda covering issues of disarmament and international security clearly shows that today's world is with greater certainty breaking away from the stereotypes of global confrontation. The logic of peace and cooperation in eliminating the threats that have remained from the time of the cold war and in meeting common security challenges at the dawn of the twenty-first century provide great opportunities for interaction in the most diverse areas.

The ongoing process of nuclear-arms reduction can serve as a vivid example of this. In the course of implementing the Russian-United States agreements on strategic arms reductions and limitations, our nations have eliminated more than 1,700 heavy bombers, missile launchers and submarines capable of carrying nuclear missiles, and have deactivated and dismantled more than 18,000 strategic and tactical nuclear warheads.

At the Moscow Summit in September 1998 Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton reaffirmed their adherence to strict compliance with their commitments under the Strategic Arms Reduction and Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaties. They expressed their determination to cooperate for the purpose of speeding up the entry into force of START II and to undertake negotiations on lower levels within the framework of START III as soon as Russia has ratified START II. In this connection, I should like to point out that the Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, has expressed his firm determination to press for ratification of START II by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in the near future. In addition, Russia, within the framework of subsequent strategic arms agreements, is prepared to make far more drastic cuts. At the present stage, we deem it important that the United States also ratify all START II-related instruments.

Russia notes the unilateral measures being taken by other nuclear Powers to reduce their arsenals. We think that such steps could be appropriately incorporated into international commitments. Generally speaking, it is high time all nuclear-weapon States joined the process of nuclear arms control and reduction.

We welcome the decision by the Conference on Disarmament to initiate negotiations on the elaboration of a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices — the so-called cut-off treaty — providing for effective international verification. In our view, it is important that all States members of the Conference on Disarmament have endorsed such negotiations, including those nations — Israel, India and Pakistan — which have not yet acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and have not subjected their nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

As we can see, the process of nuclear disarmament is constantly growing and moving towards its final destination, namely, the elimination of nuclear weapons. Russia continues to be committed to that goal. At the same time, one should cherish no illusions that the process can be easily completed in a flash. Unfortunately, the world is still far from an ideal one, and there still remain threats to international security as well as the natural economic limitations caused by the considerable spending on nuclear arms elimination. In the light of this, attempts to bring

about the unduly fast adoption of strictly time-framed nuclear arms elimination programmes are counter-productive.

On the other hand, efforts made by the international community should serve the purpose of creating an environment conducive to the phased reduction of nuclear capabilities. First of all, it is a question of establishing measures for preventing the proliferation of nuclear arms. As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Russia believes it to be a key instrument in ensuring international security and calls for its strengthening and universalization. We consider that to be the main goal of the Treaty's review process, including the Review Conference of its States parties scheduled for the year 2000.

We note Brazil's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which we consider to be an important political step and fully welcome. We call upon other States that have not yet done so to follow that positive example.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the most significant achievements in the area of disarmament. The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998 seriously challenged that Treaty as well as international efforts to consolidate the global nuclear arms non-proliferation regime in general. Russia condemns those actions. We urge India and Pakistan to enter into an active bilateral dialogue to discuss all unsettled issues in order to ease tension in their relations. Those countries sent a positive message with their declarations of willingness to refrain from conducting nuclear tests in the future and to take part in negotiations on the cut-off treaty held in Geneva. We strongly urge them to accede unconditionally to the CTBT, which is the only realistic and feasible approach.

Russia advocates the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. The concept of nuclear-free space is consonant with the Russian President's initiative to limit the deployment of nuclear arms within the national boundaries of the respective nuclear States. We also believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is the best way to provide additional security assurances to non-nuclear States. Nearly a hundred non-nuclear-weapon member States in the respective zones have so far obtained legally binding assurances against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

It is of course important that agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones comply with universally recognized international criteria and fully ensure the nuclear-free status of the region they cover. Issues related to the clear geographical delimitation of zones, the responsibilities to be borne by Member States and the terms and conditions applied to the creation of the zones, including a ban on the transit of nuclear arms through their territory, need to be examined thoroughly.

I should like to draw attention to an issue which, in our opinion, calls for close scrutiny, namely, depriving terrorists of any opportunity to gain possession of nuclear weapons. Russia has submitted a draft convention to combat acts of nuclear terrorism to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. We expect that other delegations will support our initiative so that the convention may be approved as early as at this present session.

Given the increased interdependency of the modern world, the threats of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are becoming transnational and global in nature.Russia takes a responsible approach to its commitments to ban chemical and biological weapons. We have submitted timely notifications to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as required by the Chemical Weapons Convention, and international inspections of the notified Russian facilities have been completed. We believe that in order to bolster the Convention's multilateral regime and maintain the status of the OPCW, the international verification mechanism should be adhered to and ways should be found to cut the Organization's expenditures.

During the recent meeting between the Presidents of Russia and the United States, a joint statement on the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention was issued. We hope that it will give a new impetus to the negotiations aimed at drafting the protocol to the Convention and that it will establish clear and objective criteria and definitions, eliminating any free interpretations of the Convention's provisions and preventing misunderstandings that could thus arise.

Russia, as a pioneer in rocket-building and space exploration, is in favour of responsible behaviour on the part of States in that area. Outer space belongs to all mankind, and it should not serve as a testing ground for new types of weapons. Attempts to build anti-satellite systems will lead to the militarization of outer space and undermine strategic stability. Furthermore, anti-satellite systems, similar as they are to anti-missile technologies, could emerge as a real channel for the circumvention of existing treaties, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in

particular. In our view, multilateral diplomacy must play an important part in addressing this issue.

We also understand the concerns raised by the proliferation and launching of ballistic missiles. Russia, in cooperation with the United States, took an initiative to exchange information on missile launches and early warning. We expect that other States that launch ballistic missiles will also make provisions for such measures, a move which would help remove unjustified risks and suspicions.

It is encouraging that the disarmament process has recently been growing both vertically and horizontally, covering new regions and topical issues. Russia supports reasonable initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in small arms. We favour the continued examination of this issue within the framework of the United Nations, including the convening of an international conference to deal with this problem, which could agree upon joint measures to ban illegal trafficking in small arms.

Russia is committed to openness in the area of international transfers of conventional weapons and intends to continue its participation in the relevant United Nations Register.

We consider the problem of anti-personnel landmines a pressing disarmament issue. As a country which is still, more than 50 years after the end of the Second World War, encountering the threat to the civilian population posed by landmines, Russia believes that international cooperation in the area of demining is crucially important and is ready to work actively for that cause under United Nations auspices.

Russia has enforced a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines and has signed the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We appreciate the efforts made by several countries with a view to banning anti-personnel landmines. However, we believe that the issue should be settled through negotiations. We call for negotiations to be launched at the Conference on Disarmament to ban transfers of anti-personnel mines.

We are convinced that global security is largely based on regional security. Russia deems it important for the United Nations to support regional disarmament processes.

The European continent is today going through a very important period. Truly unparalleled measures are being taken there which are designed to lay the foundation for security in the twenty-first century.

I should like to mention the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). We feel that the renewed instrument reflecting the new circumstances will help to soften the consequences of the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has a negative impact on European security, and that it will serve as solid proof of the declarations that the Alliance's defence policy is not directed against Russia and other Eastern European nations.

We hope that in the next few months the negotiating States will succeed in reaching mutually acceptable solutions to the key issues of the negotiations, namely, ensuring stability in Central Europe and settling the so-called flank issue. All of them, essentially, are highlighted in the Russia-NATO Founding Act. In this context, we pin great hopes on the dialogue between Russia and NATO conducted within the framework of the Permanent Joint Council, which is turning into a useful tool for the discussion of CFE-related issues, but which, of course, does not substitute for negotiations held in Vienna.

The Russian delegation has set forth a number of fresh ideas aimed at giving a boost to the Vienna negotiations. If we want to be successful, every party will have to meet its counterparts half way, whereas reliance on unilateral concessions will take us nowhere.

Today we are living in an information age that is a basic reflection of every aspect of our societies overall and that opens up broad prospects for the rapid and harmonious development of our world civilization. Today we can talk about the creation of a truly global information sector within the international community, in which information is becoming the most valuable possession of both nations and the world at large.

At the same time, it is essential to consider the threat — perhaps for the time being only potential, but nonetheless serious — that developments in the information field can be used for purposes incompatible with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security, the observance of the principles of the non-use of force, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for human rights and freedoms.

There is also emerging a real threat of information resources' being tapped for terrorist or criminal purposes, which could lead to a disaster. In our opinion, such a threat

requires that preventive measures be taken today. We cannot permit the emergence of a fundamentally new area of international confrontation, which may lead to an escalation of the arms race based on the latest developments of the scientific and technological revolution and, as a result, divert an enormous amount of the resources needed for peaceful creativity and development.

The Russian Federation believes that the issue of international information security should be discussed by the United Nations in a specific and purposeful manner. This purpose is served by a draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.17) entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security", which was prepared by the Russian Federation and distributed as a General Assembly document under agenda item 63. We should like to take the opportunity at this early stage to point out that our proposal is non-confrontational in nature, that it strives for consensus and that it searches for ways to solve problems through collective wisdom and joint efforts, on the basis of the common interest of the international community. We intend to give a detailed presentation of the draft resolution in the course of the substantive debate, and we call upon delegations that might take an interest in it to consider their possible co-sponsorship.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): First of all, I should like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your well-deserved election to the office of Chairman of this important Committee and to pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mongolia's position on many of the disarmament and international security related issues found expression in the Final Document of the twelfth summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held in August-September in Durban, South Africa. Nevertheless, I should like today to make six points, as follows.

The first concerns fully multilateral disarmament mechanisms. My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his important and timely statement on the pressing issues of disarmament and international security. In this regard, we welcome the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which, together with further improvements in the work of this Committee and some other disarmament bodies, is viewed by my delegation as a positive step in strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament at the threshold of the new millennium. Similarly, Mongolia welcomes the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of the Ad Hoc Committees on negative security assurances and on fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices as timely steps towards making long overdue progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, I come to nuclear disarmament. Despite the encouraging signs that I have mentioned, my delegation believes that in reality little progress has been registered of late in the field of nuclear disarmament. The nuclear Powers have yet to embark on serious nuclear disarmament negotiations, as required by article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and upheld by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion. Moreover, the series of nuclear tests conducted a few months ago in South Asia have raised the spectre of nuclear-weapons proliferation and of igniting a nuclear arms race in the region, with possible far-reaching destabilizing consequences well beyond the region.

Mongolia, like many other States, has expressed its deep regret over the tests, urged India and Pakistan to refrain from any further tests and appealed to them to take steps to become parties to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Mongolia's support for the latest encouraging declarations of intent by those States to sign the CTBT. In this context, my delegation welcomes the declaration by the People's Republic of China that it will not resume nuclear tests despite these recent tests.

My delegation believes that the eight-nation joint declaration of 9 June this year is timely and intended, as the representative of the Republic of South Africa pointed out,

> "to put forward a realistic and achievable agenda for the achievement of nuclear disarmament." (*A/C.1/53/PV.3*)

We believe that the eight-nation initiative deserves serious attention and support.

My third point concerns the formation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones. Among the international efforts aimed at contributing to strengthening nuclear security and enhancing stability, Mongolia attaches great importance to the contributions of non-nuclear States, especially by, *inter alia*, establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. We believe that such zones are important measures in the process of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In this context, our delegation welcomes and supports the latest regional effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The recent consultative expert-level meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and, especially, the preliminary exchange of views on the basic elements of the future treaty are encouraging. It is our hope that the zone in Central Asia will be created before the year 2000, as underlined in the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review Conference. As a close, if not an immediate, neighbour of the Central Asian States, and as one of the active advocates of this proposal, we are happy to see action being taken on it. Mongolia is prepared to offer its full cooperation and support in this endeavour.

Fourthly, I turn to Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. If one looks at the geophysical map of the world, one can see that for evident geophysical reasons some States cannot be part of one or another geographical region. This is the case with Mongolia, which does not physically border on any Central Asian State. However, this cannot serve as a valid reason to exclude States such as Mongolia from common disarmament efforts, including the efforts to expand the network of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In fact, the international community recognized as far back as 1975 the right of even individual States to create nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Inspired by the progress in the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, and guided by the noble aim of turning yet another part of the world, which is larger than Central Europe, into such a zone, Mongolia in 1992 declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This declaration of ours has been well received and even supported by our two immediate neighbours, China and Russia, the three other nuclear-weapon States and the entire Non-Aligned Movement. In Durban last September, the latter declared that the Movement welcomed and supported Mongolia's policy to institutionalize its single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone status. Mongolia's contacts with the nuclear-weapon States give us reason to believe that its status could be institutionalized in an appropriate form in the near future, reflecting its geopolitical role and balance of interests.

My fifth point is with regard to the role of small and medium-sized States. Disarmament and ensuring international security are not the exclusive prerogatives of the big and powerful. The role of small and medium-sized States in the process of disarmament and strengthening international security should not be underestimated. Forming as they do the vast majority of the international community, they are playing, collectively or individually, a more active role in the disarmament and confidence-building processes. The role of the Non-Aligned Movement and of some regional mechanisms is vivid proof of that.

In this connection, and in the context of highlighting the role of smaller States in promoting international security and mutual confidence, I should like to dwell briefly on what my country is doing in this respect. This year Mongolia published for the first time a defence White Paper. It is based on Mongolia's national security and foreign policy concepts as well as on the fundamentals of the country's military doctrine. The defence White Paper states that Mongolia pursues an open and non-aligned policy and that it does not view any country as its enemy. It has refrained from joining any military alliance or grouping. It has also refrained from allowing its territory or airspace to be used against any other country, as well as from allowing the stationing of foreign troops or weapons, including nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction, on its territory. Instead, in the past few years it has set up or upgraded a number of seismic monitoring stations in its territory as an important, integral part of the worldwide network of stations for monitoring the compliance of States with the CTBT. These stations have clearly detected all the South Asian nuclear tests, and the data have been duly forwarded to the proper international bodies.

For obvious reasons, Mongolia gives priority to its relations with its immediate neighbours, in pursuit of a policy of balanced relationships. Maintaining a balanced relationship does not mean, in our case, keeping a mechanical equidistance between them or taking identical positions on all issues. The policy is meant to strengthen trust and to develop all-round good-neighbourly relations with both of them, taking due account of their policies in regard to our clearly defined vital national interests. A policy of non-involvement and neutrality is being pursued in relation to the possible disputes that might arise between the two neighbours. Our policy is well understood and well received by our two neighbours, thus expanding the area of confidence and good-neighbourliness in the region. It also fully coincides with the Sino-Russian joint declaration that they will not use force or the threat of force in any form whatsoever against each other, including using the territory and airspace of third countries.

With respect to the United Nations, the defence White Paper specifically underlines that Mongolia will fulfil its United Nations Charter obligations to support the latter's activities, when necessary, by way of dispatching observers and offering good-offices mediation and translation services.

This year Mongolia has become a fully fledged dialogue partner of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, and it intends to participate more actively in the regional multilateral activities aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability at the regional level. Moreover, together with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Mongolia intends to host next summer in Ulan Bator an international conference to focus on the pressing disarmament and security-related issues of the region. Bearing in mind the role that the Centre is playing in discussing and examining regional disarmament problems, and seeing the great potential of this Centre, my country is in favour of further enhancing the Centre's activities on a solid financial basis.

My sixth point concerns the special session devoted to disarmament. Some progress was registered with respect to the question of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) during the last session of the Disarmament Commission. However, no consensus has emerged in the Commission on the objectives and agenda of the special session, as required by General Assembly resolution 52/38 F. This is unfortunate. Two decades have passed since the holding of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which adopted truly historic decisions, and a decade has elapsed since the third special session. The implementation of special sessions devoted to disarmament needs proper review and appraisal. Moreover, the question of nuclear disarmament is acquiring even greater importance in the wake of the recent nuclear tests in South Asia.

In addition, at the threshold of the third millennium the geopolitical contours of the world are undergoing dramatic changes and transformations that demand adequate collective responses and adjustments. New forms of potential threat are looming with the intensification of scientific and technological progress. One such potential threat has been identified by the representative of the Russian Federation with developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. All these changes and transformations call for the speediest convening of SSOD IV.

My delegation believes that fixing the concrete date for convening SSOD IV is the least the Assembly should do at this stage, so as to allow it to proceed immediately to concrete preparations. Since the session needs to be adequately prepared, and since the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference is scheduled to be held in the year 2000, it seems logical to focus on 2001 as the year for convening SSOD IV and to take a decision on that at this present session.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Mr. Chairman, my delegation is glad to see you presiding over the work of the Committee and to extend to you our warm congratulations. We assure you and the other officers of the Committee of our full support and cooperation.

Disarmament and international security remain the key issues on the United Nations agenda, inasmuch as a stable peace and a secure international environment are basic and fundamental for ensuring a better world for every nation.

Looking back, we can see some distinct progress in this domain. Despite some disappointments, our disarmament achievements, although still very modest, have been very important. These achievements give us confidence that we can do more if we act together and with more vigour.

Since last year we have managed to reach agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a fissile material treaty. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) finally entered into force. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction received the necessary number of ratifications for its subsequent entry into force on 1 March 1999. Positive steps are being taken towards strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

Step by step, sometimes with evident progress and breakthroughs in some directions, sometimes painfully overcoming various impasses, the international community is gradually, piece by piece, shaping a new architecture of security for the twenty-first century.We strongly believe that in this coming century, as the President of the Ukraine once said here at the United Nations, the world should become free of weapons of mass destruction, and the international community should develop every opportunity to bring this goal closer.

These aspirations, however, have experienced serious challenges in the light of recent developments in South Asia. We have explicitly expressed our views on this issue. Our reaction to the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan was motivated by Ukraine's well-known position on nuclear disarmament and its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation as a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Therefore, I should like to voice again our appeal to these two countries,

with which Ukraine has friendly relations, to adhere to the international non-proliferation regime and to refrain from further nuclear tests. In this context, we welcome the statements made by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan in which they indicated the progress in both countries on becoming parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

My delegation shares the views expressed by many representatives in this Committee that the entry into force of the CTBT would contribute significantly to furthering the process of practical nuclear disarmament, with a view to the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons. As for Ukraine, I should note that all documents related to the Treaty are ready for submission to the Parliament for ratification.

As a party to START I, Ukraine considers the START process to be an integral part of the process of nuclear disarmament. Today criticism is mounting among non-nuclear States over the lack of progress in this crucial field. We are convinced that ratification by the Russian Federation of START II without delay would enable the latter's rapid entry into force and clear the way for negotiations on START III.

We also support the declaration by a group of countries on 9 June 1998, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

I should like to stress my delegation's satisfaction over the consensus reached in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive devices. Our satisfaction is doubled by the fact that at that time the Conference on Disarmament was chaired by the representative of Ukraine. In our view, the scope of the future fissile material treaty should not be limited to banning the production of such material. The possibility of reducing stocks should also be considered. We also believe that the provisions of a future agreement must envisage the declaration of existing stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium.

The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and their accumulation and proliferation continue to constitute a serious threat to regional and national security, to contribute to the aggravation of tensions that lead to internal conflicts and to have negative repercussions on the economic development of the affected countries. This was repeatedly stated by many delegations at recent meetings of the General Assembly on agenda item 164, concerning the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We believe that the time has come for the international community to study and consider action-oriented recommendations to combat the destabilizing flow of and illicit traffic in small arms as a starting point for negotiating a global convention. Our deliberations on this issue in the United Nations Disarmament Commission will undoubtedly facilitate further discussions on such a convention.

Ukraine welcomed the achievements of the Ottawa process, as it shares the common aspiration to overcome the humanitarian crisis caused by large-scale, indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. As its contribution to the efforts of the international community, Ukraine has strictly adhered to the national moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines since 1995. It does not produce such weapons. Moreover, Ukraine undertook unilateral measures on the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel landmines. In March-April of this year alone, we destroyed more than 100,000 anti-personnel landmines.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, supervised by Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala. We believe that under his able and dynamic stewardship the Department will successfully refocus the attention of the United Nations on crucial issues of disarmament. We hope that the spirit of reform conceived at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will guide the Department's current activities.

Those are some of my delegation's comments on some aspects of the issues before us. We reserve the right to make additional specific comments on some other issues in the course of our debate.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Mr. Chairman, I take pleasure in extending to you, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, my sincere congratulations on your election to preside over the work of the First Committee. We are confident that your qualities and vast diplomatic experience will contribute to the success of the Committee's deliberations.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, we are concerned with determining new criteria for international multilateral relations, which should be based on equality and on the common goals and interests of all States as well as on a full commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the rule of international law. Yet that ambition seems difficult of attainment, as the policies of the arms race and mutual deterrence continue to prevail in some

regions of the world, especially where ethnic differences, civil conflicts and foreign occupation persist. None of this would have come about had it not been for the unjustified policies pursued by some States in producing, stockpiling and transferring certain destructive weapons. That, in turn, has created both security problems and socio-economic problems, including displacement of populations, human rights violations, terrorism and illicit trafficking in weapons, environmental degradation and other actions that have worked against real stability and prevented peoples from benefiting equally from development opportunities.

Taken as a whole, such international events and their evolution demonstrate that the current world environment consists of various elements stemming from the lack of the necessary political will on the part of certain States to halt arms races involving various kinds of weapons and to resort to peaceful negotiating methods or arbitration and other legal frameworks in resolving their differences, in keeping with the norms of international law, principles of equality and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-intervention in internal affairs. As a result, we regard the continuation of such situations, particularly in the Middle East and Arab Gulf region, and in neighbouring regions as well, as a direct and dangerous threat not only to the peoples and countries of those regions but to international peace and security as a whole. This is conducive to the creation of a serious imbalance that is unacceptable in bilateral and international relations.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the recent international arbitration regarding sovereignty over the Hanish archipelago, where the decision was in favour of Yemen. We regard such a peaceful and legal method as a civilized approach that should be adopted to settle similar disputes. In particular, it should be adopted with regard to the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of our three islands of Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, in violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Such a solution would achieve security and stability in the region and enhance the aspirations of its peoples to economic and social development.

In the same vein, we support the efforts being made by President Hosni Mubarak and other parties to contain the present dispute between Turkey and Syria through peaceful negotiations. We also express our support for the efforts being made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to reach a peaceful and objective resolution of the situation presently existing between Iran and Afghanistan. Similarly, we also hope that contacts between India and Pakistan will be promoted so that they may resolve their problems in a peaceful manner rather than through competition in nuclear testing, which, in our opinion, can never contribute to containing problems resulting from differences between them. On the contrary, such competition would complicate and prolong those differences, threaten destruction for their peoples and impede regional security and stability.

The United Arab Emirates, honouring its international commitments and convinced of the importance of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, has signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This was in the nature of its contribution to international efforts aimed at promoting respect for the universality of those three treaties, which are of such importance in global disarmament.

Convinced of the linkage between regional and international security, the United Arab Emirates welcomed the initiatives aiming at the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, Africa, the Pacific and, lastly, Central Asia. We consider the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East to be most urgently needed; it is a basic element in the realization of a just, durable and comprehensive peace in that region, in accordance with international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace.

Consequently, we once again call upon the international community to exert additional pressure on the Government of Israel, as a nuclear-weapon State, to accede immediately to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also support the call for a ban on all transfers of nuclear-related equipment, information and resources to Israel. Such transfers constitute basic sources contributing to an increase in Israel's nuclear capabilities and facilities, which, in our view, pose a continuing grave and direct threat not only to the security of its neighbours in the region but also to international peace and security and to other world efforts in the field of sustainable socio-economic development.

While we attach great importance to the efforts being made by the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of global disarmament, we believe that the realization of the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is a collective international responsibility. This calls for cooperation between the nuclear-weapon

States, particularly with regard to providing assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, we support the proposed establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with a view to the institution of a programme of action to eliminate nuclear weapons worldwide within a fixed time-frame. We also support international efforts aimed at concluding an agreement banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, with a view to guaranteeing, through such an agreement, the completion of efforts being made to bring about the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates supports the position of the Group of Arab States and the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, which have called for enhanced transparency in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In this regard, due consideration should be given to the legitimate needs of self-defence, as well as other political, security and military concerns for each geographic region, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. We also share the international concern about the continued illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons, since they represent basic sources feeding terrorism and violence and are an element in the destabilization of States.

We also support the outcome of the Ottawa Conference, held last December, which resulted in an international Convention banning the use of anti-personnel landmines, since such lethal weapons affect the lives of millions of innocent civilians, not only during wars but in peacetime as well. They also hinder many development programmes in affected countries. In this connection, we call for increased international cooperation to provide the facilities needed for demining activities in the developing countries and to assist in the rehabilitation of the thousands of victims in various parts of the world.

In conclusion, we welcome the proposals for strengthening United Nations capabilities in the field of disarmament as a collective responsibility that constitutes the best global investment in the construction of peace, sustainable development and security.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Several representatives have asked to make statements in exercise of the right of reply. I would remind representatives that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second.

Mr. Shin Kak-soo (Republic of Korea): In response to the statement by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the fourth meeting of the First Committee yesterday, I should like to make some brief remarks in order to give the Committee a clear and correct understanding of the issues involved.

First, on the North Korean nuclear issue, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea argued as though North Korea were currently under no obligation to comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement and to cooperate with the IAEA in the Agreement's implementation. This is incorrect. Its obligation to fully comply with the IAEA Safeguards Agreement is a legal obligation on it as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This legally binding obligation cannot be replaced or superseded by a bilateral arrangement, such as the Geneva Agreed Framework. The Agreed Framework can only serve to complement and reinforce the obligations to which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is bound. It could never exonerate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from existing legal obligations under the NPT and the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. This has been reaffirmed on numerous occasions by the international community through resolutions of the United Nations and the IAEA, including the most recent one adopted at the forty-second regular session of the General Conference of the IAEA on 25 September 1998.

For the purpose of full compliance with the Safeguards Agreement, it is of paramount importance for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully cooperate with the IAEA to preserve all the information which the IAEA deems necessary for verification of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's past nuclear activities. It is also crucial that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea demonstrate full transparency in the context of the IAEA's activities monitoring the freeze of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear facilities, as provided in the Agreed Framework. Therefore, I once again urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to respond positively.

Secondly, with regard to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, my delegation is very disappointed to note that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has virtually declined to implement the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which it freely entered into with the Republic of Korea. Nothing can justify any attempt to turn such an important legal instrument into a scrap of paper.

Making the Korean peninsula free from the danger of nuclear proliferation is of paramount importance for the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and for the well-being of the Korean people as a whole. Moreover, it is also crucial to the security of the region and beyond. In this regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate its appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to be forthcoming in taking the necessary steps for the implementation of the Joint Declaration as soon as possible.

Thirdly, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea spoke of political and military threats against it and of unwarranted misgivings regarding forced unification by others. This perception is groundless. As we have repeatedly stated, my Government is currently actively pursuing a constructive engagement policy, called the "Sunshine Policy", based on the following three principles: no tolerance for any military provocation by North Korea; no attempts on our part to absorb North Korea for unification; the active promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation, exchange and cooperation. Furthermore, my Government is making its best efforts to ease tension and to establish a durable peace regime on the Korean peninsula through the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue and the four-party talks process.

In this connection, I would recall the statement of my Foreign Minister during last month's general debate during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, in which he said:

> "The main thrust of President Kim's engagement policy is to establish a workable system of peaceful coexistence based on reconciliation and mutual trust."

And he added a little later:

> "our immediate objective is, first and foremost, peaceful coexistence." (A/53/PV.15)

Let me underline once again our earnest hope that the DPRK can understand our genuine intention and respond with sincerity and good faith to our policies.

Finally, I fully agree with the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea when he said that priority should be given to the dismantling of the cold-war structure on the Korean peninsula. But to achieve this goal successfully, concrete actions for non-proliferation and disarmament of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery should be taken now. During the Korean War, the Korean people experienced the second largest number of casualties of this century. That is enough for us. Given the volatile and tense situation in the Korean peninsula, it is imperative that, first and foremost, the Korean peninsula be cleared of any horrific weapons of mass destruction.

The Republic of Korea is a party to the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), three basic legal instruments which significantly contribute to peace and security in the Korean peninsula. We have also signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we are now proceeding with domestic procedures for its ratification next year. With its already formidable build-up, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has no reason not to take similar steps, and it should renounce, once and for all, weapons of mass destruction.

I wish to reiterate our sincere appeal to the DPRK to join us as a reliable partner in our noble endeavours for the genuine peace and prosperity of the Korean peninsula and the world.

Mr. Alborzi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In the statement by the representative of the United States earlier today, reference was made to Iran's missile technology capabilities. Since this issue was raised in the context of weapons of mass destruction, I would like to recall that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to all conventions on weapons of mass destruction, without exception, and considers its missile technology as a legitimate, conventional defensive means. Iran's deterrent missile technology serves solely for self-defence and, as was clearly pointed out in an Iranian Foreign Ministry statement, does not constitute a threat to any country and is not set for first use.

My delegation, however, believes that attention should be given to the weapons of mass destruction and missile capabilities of Israel, the only non-party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the Middle East region. Ironically, Iran's missile tests did not raise any concern on the part of the countries in the region. In the meantime, Israeli weapons of mass destruction, as well as Israel's clandestine nuclear and missile programmes, continue to pose major threats to regional security. This is an established fact, on which there exists a strong regional consensus, and the speaker could have sounded more reasonable if he had referred to this fact and the real threat to the Middle East.

Reference was also made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates to some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country, which, in my view, had little relevance to the mandate of the First Committee. Since we have clearly and repeatedly put on record our position on this issue, I need not go into details. Iran is of the firm view that this issue should be addressed in bilateral negotiations and with goodwill in order to find a solution. We are fully committed to our international obligations, including those arising from the 1971 agreement. We have friendly relations with our neighbours in the Persian Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates, and we stand ready, as in the past, to enter into negotiations in good faith and on the basis of historical fact and international law, without preconditions, in order to remove any and all misunderstandings.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates)(*interpretation from Arabic*): I apologize for speaking again. It is most regrettable that my colleague, the representative of Iran, should respond to my statement in the Committee as he did. He is fully aware that the Islamic Republic of Iran has occupied islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates since 1971. What I said stemmed basically from the principles of the Charter and international law. We once again express the hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran will respond to the peaceful initiatives of the United Arab Emirates, either on a bilateral level or through recourse to the International Court of Justice, to reach a final settlement of the problem of Iran's occupation of our three islands and to strengthen cooperation between the United Arab Emirates and Iran, on the one hand, and between the other countries of the region and Iran, on the other.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.